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The Socioeconomic Dimension of Islamist Radicalization in Egypt and Tunisia[1]

Clara-Auguste Süß and Ahmad Noor Aakhunzzada

ABSTRACT

Based on a comprehensive study of both academic publications and grey literature and informed by social movement theory, this working paper analyzes processes of Islamist radicalization in Egypt and Tunisia. It develops a theoretical framework that identifies key mechanisms that link socioeconomic factors and Islamist radicalization, and systematically reviews the existing research in order to identify evidence that supports the relevance of each of the different mechanisms. More specifically, we distinguish between socioeconomic grievances, socioeconomic opportunities and framing processes that build on socioeconomic narratives. Socioeconomic grievances can drive radicalization processes (a) by motivating individuals or groups to use violent tactics or join violent groups, and (b) by contributing to the delegitimization of the state, which, in turn, can legitimize the use of violence. Socioeconomic opportunities, which are basically constituted by the (relative) absence of the state and of state services, can contribute to radicalization (a) by facilitating the generation of material resources by violent groups, and (b) by providing radical groups with the opportunity to attract supporters and followers by offering social services. Even if analyzing those mechanisms reveals obvious interconnections in the form of framing processes and socioeconomic narratives, the literature review showed that this constructivist perspective remains understudied.

1 INTRODUCTION

Since the overthrow of the regimes of Ben Ali and Mubarak in 2011, political transformation processes in Tunisia and Egypt have taken very different paths: In Tunisia, Salafist groups as well as the 'moderate' Islamist party al-Nahda were completely excluded from the political sphere during the Ben Ali era (1987–2011). After the uprising in 2010/2011, al-Nahda came into power via democratic elections, first as the most powerful party in the troika government (2011–2013) and later as a junior partner in the government led by secular Nidaa Tounes (Cavatorta/Merone 2013a). Hence, there was a shift from exclusion to inclusion of Islamist actors. Regarding this shift, events in Egypt occurred in the opposite way: The last decade of Mubarak rule was characterized by a mostly quietist Salafi movement and by the political integration of the Muslim Brotherhood via parliament. Again, the Arab uprisings marked a turning point. After 2011, the Muslim Brotherhood founded the Freedom and Justice Party that won the legislative elections in 2012, but parliament was dissolved after a few months. The Muslim Brotherhood also won the presidential elections, but Muhammad Mursi was brought down by a military coup in the summer of 2013. After the coup, the military regime turned to extreme repression against the Muslim Brotherhood and almost all other Islamist actors (Pioppi 2013).

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Yet in spite of these contrasting political contexts, both countries saw the shift of Salafist actors to violent strategies, a process which can be defined as radicalization.[2] In its search for explanations, the academic literature offers a broad spectrum of possible reasons, among others, including ideological, political or personal factors thought to make radicalization processes more likely (for an overview see for example Malthaner 2017). The most prominently discussed explanation in the context of political Islam is the question of the political exclusion of Islamists (Schwedler 2011),[3] but this cannot explain radicalization in Tunisia. Another reason that is widely mentioned is socioeconomic marginalization. And indeed, Egypt and Tunisia alike face similar socioeconomic challenges, such as high (youth) unemployment, extensive informal economies and areas that have been marginalized or practically abandoned by the state, such as the Tunisian-Libyan and Tunisian-Algerian border regions and the Sinai in Egypt. At first glance, this coincidence seems to support the assumption that socioeconomic grievances and socioeconomic marginalization are enabling factors for Islamist radicalization – a thesis that is found in research on the MENA region, Europe and the United States alike (Dunne 2015; Fahmi/Meddeb 2015; Varvelli 2016).

Yet, while most studies on violent Islamist actors in Egypt and/or Tunisia emphasize socioeconomic factors as relevant or even crucial, an actual in-depth empirical analysis of the socioeconomic dimension of Islamist radicalization is still missing. Such analysis would seek to answer a whole set of questions: To what extent is the radicalization of individuals and groups in Egypt and Tunisia empirically associated with specific socioeconomic factors (unemployment, lack of infrastructure, etc.)? How do socioeconomic grievances shape Islamist radicalization? What is the specific social meaning that Islamist groups attach to socioeconomic concerns, and to what extent do Islamist groups offer plausible injustice frames that help make sense of perceived alienation and convert it into violent political action? Is socioeconomic marginalization specifically relevant in creating this feeling of separation from society that leads to fighting 'infidels' (including Muslim rulers)? What is the role of socioeconomic benefits or services offered by Islamist groups?

As a starting point for a broader research agenda, this paper presents the results of a systematic analysis of existing scholarship that assesses the causes and dynamics of Islamist radicalization in Egypt and Tunisia, focusing on the years since the Arab uprisings. The paper systematizes the current state of research to shed light on the role of socioeconomic factors in radicalization processes. Based on a comprehensive study of both academic and non-academic publications and informed by social movement theory, it develops a theoretical framework that identifies key mechanisms that link socioeconomic factors and Islamist radicalization, and systematically reviews the existing research in order to identify evidence that supports the relevance of each of the different factors and mechanisms. In the reviewed literature on Islamist radicalization in Egypt and Tunisia we identify three general aspects about how socioeconomic factors influence or even lead to radicalization: (1) socioeconomic grievances, (2) socioeconomic opportunities, which are mostly constituted by the absence of the state or of state services, and (3) framing processes that build on socioeconomic narratives. The paper presents the arguments according to this logic by identifying a direct and an indirect mechanism for the first two aspects, before presenting the findings on framing processes and narratives and on this basis suggesting a more thorough look at this constructivist perspective.

2 See section 2 for an overview of the existing debate on the term *radicalization*.

3 For more details on this "militarization of contention" in Egypt, see e.g., Boserup/Collombier 2018.

The working paper proceeds in four steps: The following section offers a short overview of the general debate on radicalization. The third section focuses on the methodical and theoretical background of this paper, presenting the key concepts and the analytical framework we have developed. The fourth and largest section consists of the empirical findings: we first present the main actors and salient regions for both Egypt and Tunisia, before presenting our findings according to the logic of our analytical framework. A conclusion summarizes the argument and derives some avenues for future research.

2 The General Debate on Radicalization

2.1 Radicalization as a Contested Term

In the academic debate on Islamist groups, just as in the general scholarship on this topic, the very concept of radicalization is contested. While most authors define radicalization narrowly in terms of (an increasing reliance on) violence (e.g., Moghaddam 2005; Porter/Kebell 2011; Della Porta/LaFree 2012; Helfstein 2012; Doosje et al. 2016; Khosrokhavar 2016), some scholars reject this definition and argue in favor of a broader conception of radicalization (e.g., Veldhuis/Staun 2009; Hafez/Mullins 2015; Angus 2016; Manea 2017). For research practical reasons, the narrow definition is used in the context of this paper, understood as "the process through which a social movement organization (SMO) shifts from predominantly non-violent tactics of contention to tactics that include violent means as well as the subsequent process of contention maintaining and possibly intensifying the newly introduced violence" (Alimi/Demetriou/Bosi 2015: 11).[4]

Even if the very concept is a highly contested term,[5] there is broad consensus among researchers that radicalization is a process that is shaped by a whole series of factors, conditions or variables (e.g., Ingram 2013; Schmid 2013; Maskaliūnaitė 2015; Frindte et al. 2016; Khosrokhavar 2016; Abay Gaspar et al. 2018). It would therefore be foolhardy to search for the cause or even the root cause of radicalization.[6] Nevertheless, a thorough look at the socioeconomic dimension of Islamist radicalization can help to explain three general outcomes in Tunisia and Egypt: individuals joining violent Islamist groups, violent Islamist groups growing and sustaining themselves and local support for violent Islamist groups.

2.2 The Socioeconomic Dimension of Radicalization

In discussions about violent Islamism and Islamist radicalization that have emerged in the political sphere, academia as well as in the general public, one key question concerns the so-called social, economic and political (root) causes (Denoeux/Carter 2009: 8), that are the underlying context conditions that cause processes of individual and collective radicalization. Examining the existing general literature about radicalization, it must be stated that socioeconomic grievances are mentioned in almost every publication as important factors in radicalization processes (e.g., McCauley/Moskalenko 2008; Denoeux/Carter 2009; Veldhuis/Staun 2009; Schmid 2013; Angus 2016; Groppi 2017). Some authors additionally differentiate between causal factors at the macro level, such as poverty, and at the micro or meso level, like relative deprivation or social/group identities

4 In this regard, the concepts of PVE and CVE (preventing/countering violent extremism) also exist, appealing to radicalization leading to the use of violent means. For further information, see Rasheed 2016.

5 For a critical overview see Neumann 2013, Malthaner 2017, Abay Gaspar et al. 2018.

6 Some researchers doubt the very question of root causes or prefer the term "preconditions" or "precipitants" (Bjørgo 2005b: 257; Malečková 2005: 41). For a more differentiated discussion of the root-cause problematique, see Bjørgo (2005a: 2, 2005b: 257f.) and Denoeux/Carter (2013: 8ff.).

linked to marginalization[7] (Veldhuis/Staun 2009: 33ff.) as well as between push and pull factors (Consigly 2018: 64; ITES 2018). For example, it is stated that "personal identity issues and wider problems of marginalisation, racism and social exclusion can act as a catalyst for radicalisation and, potentially, violent extremism" (Angus 2016: 5). Recently, organizations working in the area of development assistance have also started to take up this link and have worked out development responses for addressing radicalization and violent extremism (USAID 2011; UNDP 2016; United Nations General Assembly 2016; GIZ 2018).

In this regard, poverty and unemployment constitute the most frequently mentioned links between socioeconomic grievances and radicalization that have been widely debated in the context of terrorism research. In general, the academic debate about poverty and terrorism flared up after 9/11 and died out in the late 2000s (Hegghammer 2016: 2).[8] The notion that poverty as "a root cause of terrorist violence is widely asserted, particularly in the Western world" (Gottlieb 2010: 34). This assertion fits at first glance with basic liberal economic theory, which presupposes that individuals are motivated primarily by material well-being:

> "Those who have opportunities to sustain and better themselves will likely accept the system in which they live and behave peacefully. By contrast, those confronting socioeconomic distress and deprivation are more likely to be drawn to radical and possibly violent movements, including terrorist movements." (ibid)

After 9/11, this poverty-terrorism thesis was further bolstered and was also famously linked to terrorism by former US president George W. Bush in March 2002 (Maskaliūnaitė 2015: 14). In addition, researchers are able to measure the thesis quite well – at least at first glance – by comparing macro data, such as GDP per capita and the number of terrorist attacks in a country. Generally, direct links between terrorism and poverty have been discussed and widely rejected (Bjørgo 2005b; Gupta 2005; Malečková 2005; Sahar Mohammad 2005; Abadie 2006; Piazza 2006, 2010; Lee 2011).

Nevertheless, socioeconomic aspects in terrorism should not be underestimated (Freytag et al. 2011: 6), but approaches aimed at analyzing and identifying direct links between poverty, radicalization and/or terrorism fall short, possibly because they remain in the field of rational choice theory and largely rely on quantitative methods and, as a result, often exclude both constructivist perspectives and qualitative methods. More recent publications on terrorism research emphasize instead indirect links between poverty and terrorism (e.g., Denoeux/Carter 2009; von Hippel 2010; Sterman 2015; Hegghammer 2016). Because this link is indirect, clear answers are not easy to find: Academic research often presents conceptual thoughts and general mechanisms instead of analyzing explicit cases (e.g., Hegghammer 2016) or very briefly examines different cases without a thorough analysis (e.g., von Hippel on the cases of Hamas, North Caucasus and al-Shabaab). Anatol Lieven adds that

> "the link between poverty and radicalisation in the Muslim world is clear, but not straightforward. […] Rather than absolute poverty, such groups, and especially

7 See section 4.1 for more details on marginalization and empirical evidence concerning Egypt and Tunisia.

8 Academic research has carried out numerous large-n studies (e.g., Abadie 2006; Piazza 2006; Freytag et al. 2011; Malečková 2015), some single case studies (e.g., Krueger/Malečková 2003 on Palestine and Hezbollah; Lee 2011 on Bengal) as well as providing some papers focused on the general 'economics of radicalization' (e.g., Ferrero 2005; Lieven 2008). An important publication addressing direct (as well as indirect) links is the edited volume entitled Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Conflicting Perspectives on Causes, Contexts and Responses (Gottlieb 2010). In addition, different reports and non-academic publications have explicitly covered the topic (e.g., Mesøy 2013; Sterman 2015; United Nations General Assembly 2016).

> young men among them, tend to be radicalised by considerations of jobs and status". (Lieven 2008: 20)

In that regard, Thomas Hegghammer (2016: 11) proposed five different mechanisms for explaining the relationship between rebelling and poverty; four of them directly support the notion that grievances enable radicalization processes. First, there is objective suffering: a person rebels because he or she is frustrated by being poor. Second, there is the social mobility closure: "[Y]ou rebel because you do not get as good a job as you feel you deserve given your qualifications." Third, Hegghammer adds horizontal inequality, or the "Robin Hood mechanism": "[Y]ou rebel not because you yourself are poor, but because your group is poor and you attribute this to systematic injustice." The last mechanism consists of neighborhood effects:

> "[P]overty comes with side effects that increase the risk of radicalization. For example, if you are unemployed, you have more time to go to the mosque or surf the Internet, where you may be lured into radical activism. Similarly, if you live in a poor, immigrant-heavy neighbourhood, you are more likely to come into contact with Islamist organizations."[9]

To conclude, it must be said that "research on the relationship between poverty and terrorism is by no means conclusive and, if anything, reveals a mixed picture" (von Hippel 2010: 61).

3 Methods and Theoretical Background

3.1 Methods

We used qualitative content analysis to systematically review and analyze existing scholarship on Islamist radicalization and its socioeconomic dimension in Egypt and Tunisia. In a first step, we developed several categories (socioeconomic grievances, resource mobilization, frames/narratives) that were deduced from social movement theory and were used to systematize and roughly analyze the literature. While doing this, we developed a new category, socioeconomic opportunities, that as we argue in the next section(s) offers a constructivist version of the rather structuralist resource mobilization theory. Altogether, we developed a theoretical framework that identifies key (causal) mechanisms that link socioeconomic factors and Islamist radicalization. With a view to the first two factors (socioeconomic grievances, socioeconomic opportunities), we identified two theses based on empirical evidence in the literature. Looking at research about framing processes and their importance for mobilization in the context of social movements, we would theoretically expect that this aspect is important for Egypt and Tunisia. Surprisingly, apart from two chapters in an edited volume (Githens-Mazer 2016; Staffell 2016), only anecdotal evidence could be found in the literature.

Generally, there is a large number of publications addressing violent Islamism, (the evolution of) jihadist groups and terrorism and/or radicalization in the MENA region after the uprisings in 2011. After an extensive literature research, we found more than 200 publications dealing with violent Islamism and/or radicalization in one or both countries of interest. The majority of the literature was published for different institutes in the form of arti-

9 The fifth mechanism consists of opportunity cost calculations (e.g., Lee 2011): "[Y]ou rebel in part because you have little to lose" (Hegghammer 2016: 11).

cles or policy briefings.[10] Going beyond this, there are also a few books that discuss various aspects of the topic in individual chapters. The search for literature was based on the keyword combination of the project title (radicalization, violent Islamist groups, Salafism, Jihadism, Tunisia, Egypt) and the abstract of the articles retrieved. The search was restricted to literature covering the dynamics in Egypt and Tunisia after 2011 (years of publication 2011–2018) and to publications covering the more general debate in the last decade (approx. 2005–2018) to ensure the most recent literature is covered and identified.

We reviewed the academic as well as non-academic literature that assessed the causes and dynamics of Islamist radicalization in both countries, especially focusing on the years since the uprisings of 2010/11. Overall, we found 14 book chapters (in 8 books) and 21 journal articles that were related to some extent to our research focus on Tunisia and Egypt. In addition to these academic publications, there are numerous non-academic articles (superficially) discussing socioeconomic factors as causes of Islamist radicalization in Tunisia and Egypt. In all, almost 80 publications mentioned that socioeconomic conditions play an important role in the process of radicalization.

	Book chapters	**Journal articles**	**Policy papers, studies**
Tunisia	Colombo 2016 Ben Mustapha Ben Arab 2018 Githens-Mazer 2016 Malka 2015 Torelli 2016, 2018 Torelli/Varvelli 2014	Cavatorta 2015 Cavatorta/Merone 2013a, 2013b Corneau-Tremblay 2015 Gartenstein-Ross/Moreng 2015 Lefèvre 2015 Macdonald/Waggoner 2018 Marks 2013 Merone 2014, 2017 Torelli/Merone/Cavatorta 2012 Wolf 2013a, 2013b Zelin/Gartenstein-Ross 2013	Boukhars 2017 Fahmi/Meddeb 2015 Herbert 2018 IRI 2017 ITES 2018 Lamloum 2016 Lounnas 2018 Moos 2017 Sadiki 2019 Watanabe 2018
Egypt	Akl 2018 Al-Anani 2016 Alterman/McCants 2015 Awad 2016a Dentice 2014, 2016 Staffell 2016	Awad 2016b Awad/Tadros 2015 Aziz 2016 Biagini 2017 Drevon 2016, 2017 Joya/Gormus 2015	Awad 2016a, 2017 Boserup/Collombier 2017 Dentice 2018 El Deen 2016 Gold 2014, 2016 Watanabe 2015

Table1: Overview of the most relevant and meaningful literature.

3.2 Key Concepts and Analytical Framework

The following section aims at presenting general arguments about the key concepts and the analytical framework. In our understanding, the "socioeconomic dimension" of Islamist radicalization indicates the existence of not only allegedly direct links (poverty and terrorism, see the general debate presented in section 2), but also of a more constructivist perspective such as perceived grievances or socioeconomic narratives that are promoted.

10 We do not cite all of these publications in this paper, because some of them only provide a description of (the evolution) of jihadism and violent Islamist groups in one or both countries.

Socioeconomic grievances[11] and opportunities are relevant concepts for explaining radicalization processes because they are indirectly as well as directly linked to actions that go hand in hand with such radicalization. Both involve established concepts in social movement theory. At a very general level, socioeconomic grievances mean a real or perceived hardship, which forms a basis of complaint (Regan/Norton 2005: 323ff.). Generally, it is possible to distinguish between socioeconomic grievances at the micro level (the personal level, e.g., individual unemployment) and the meso level (grievances that involve specific groups, e.g., Bedouin tribes in Sinai or young people). A common analytic term in social movement theory is political opportunity structures (POS), which emphasize adjustments in the political context that influence possibilities for mobilization and success of collective actors (e.g., Kriesi 2004; Meyer 2004).[12] These structures are relevant to the overall question, to the extent that they give rise to different socioeconomic activities of actors and groups. In the context of this paper, we adapt this approach and look at socioeconomic opportunities constituted by the (relative) absence of the state and/or of state services, because this link is evident for Egypt and Tunisia (e.g., Taşpınar 2015: 80; Dentice 2016: 133; Zoubir 2017: 4). Both POS and resource mobilization theory, that represent structuralist approaches in the context of social movement theory, are merged into our rather constructivist understanding of socioeconomic opportunities.

In addition, a look at the rebel governance approach, which addresses recruitment and the relationship between armed groups and the social surrounding in general, provides interesting insights. This part of the broader field of radicalization research looks at armed non-state actors performing state functions mostly in contexts of civil war and insurgency, but also in urban contexts. It empirically focuses, in particular, on Syria, Iraq, and Libya, but also on 'special' zones such as Sinai and areas along the Tunisian-Algerian and Tunisian-Libyan border. In recent years, research on the causes of civil wars has shifted from an emphasis on the rebels' motives for the emergence of violence to an analysis of the political dimensions of life during civil wars and to the political and socioeconomic contexts that create opportunities for rebels to emerge and spread. This shift has produced numerous academic publications. In this context, Stefan Malthaner (2011) mentions the importance of the so-called 'setting' in which relationships between militant (Islamist) groups and their social environment are formed and where interactions take place (see Le Blanc 2013 for the urban context).[13] Another dominant topic in the literature is the legitimacy of rebel groups among the populations they control or interact with. It is often stated that rebel organizations must seek support and legitimacy and therefore "must adapt to the population" (Péclard/Mechoulan 2015: 21), because rebels "do not operate in a social and political vacuum" (ibid.: 22). Such groups often tend to provide different benefits "(protection, money, social services) in return for becoming a supporter of fighter" (Boukhars 2018: 6).

In sum, we argue that in the literature on Islamist radicalization in Egypt and Tunisia authors identify socioeconomic grievances, socioeconomic opportunities, namely the ab-

11 As a result of the context of the overall question, the paper will focus on socioeconomic grievances and will mainly leave other forms of hardships, such as political grievances, undiscussed.

12 The term "socioeconomic opportunities" used in this paper should not be confused with POS, which should only be understood here as a contextual template.

13 Malthaner (2015: 425), in another publication, distinguished between four basic ties underlying support relationships: utilitarian exchange; ties of traditional loyalty based on kinship or patron-client or personal relationships; ties of defensive communal solidarity where a notion of representation can be identified; political mobilization, where framing processes and "the emergence of collective identities referring to common values and visions of a better future play important roles in sustaining participation and connecting them to broader audiences" (ibid.: 430).

sence of the state, and socioeconomic narratives as the three main socioeconomic aspects that enable Islamist radicalization. Figure 1 summarizes this analytical framework.

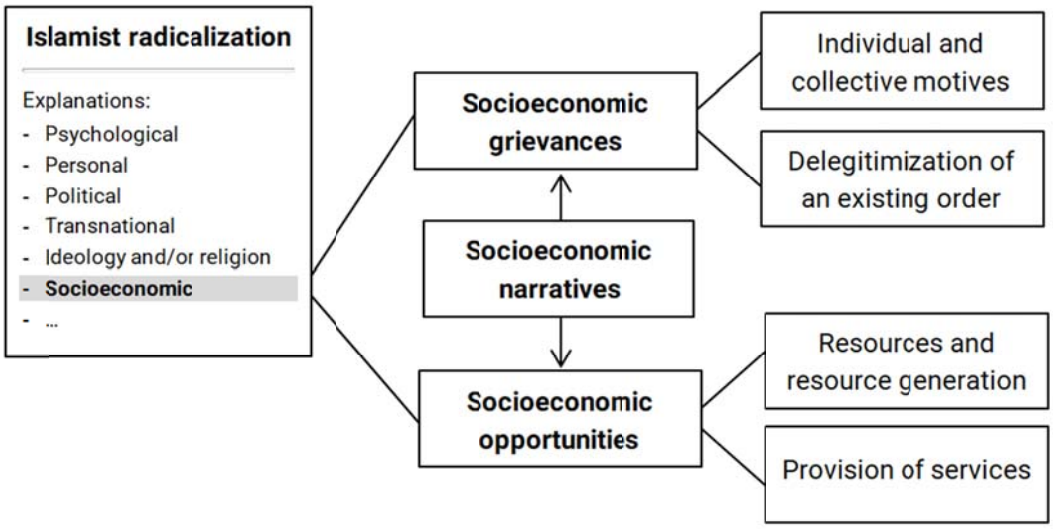

Figure 1: Analytical framework

Of course, socioeconomic grievances and opportunities are connected and intertwined.[14] We argue that this connection can be grasped by a constructivist perspective which looks at how the actors themselves make sense of and use socioeconomic grievances and opportunities to generate support. Consequently, we need to look much more deeply into identity aspects, socioeconomic frames and narratives, which have not been closely studied so far.[15] Framing means "a collective process of interpretation, attribution, and social construction, [and] mediates between opportunity and action" (McAdam et al. 2004: 41). Collective action frames also help to "render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action" (Benford/Snow 2000: 614). There are three main core tasks: diagnostic framing that identifies the problem, prognostic framing that involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem that has been identified, and action-mobilizing framing that provides a "'call to arms' or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action" (ibid.: 617). Nonetheless, framing processes are useful for understanding mobilization and recruitment, because "narratives of economic, social, political and cultural marginalization are often key in rebels' strategies of legitimation and in establishing rebel rule" (Péclard/Mechoulan 2015: 24). Other authors add that "poverty has frequently been used as justification for violence by social-revolutionary terrorists, who may claim to represent the poor and marginalized without being poor themselves" (Bjørgo 2005b: 256f.).

With a view to the socioeconomic dimension, and according to Allan and colleagues, socioeconomic narratives can be understood as the

> "story-telling, or as verbal expressions of an individual or groups of their grievances, marginalization, ideology or worldview. In this sense, narratives can also

14 For information about the interconnections between grievances, (political) opportunities and frames see Simmons 2014.

15 The only publication explicitly addressing narratives used by jihadist groups is the edited volume by Simon Staffell and Akil N. Awan (2016), which provides one chapter on each country. The contributions address jihadist narratives in general, without a special focus on socioeconomic factors only.

> be assumed to give justifications of violence and terrorism against others and by providing themselves with a sense of self-importance." (Allan et al. 2015: 32)

Furthermore, the concepts of socioeconomic grievances, frames and identity constructions are well connected: "Movements frame specific grievances within general collective action frames which dignify claims, connect them to others, and help to produce a collective identity among claimants" (McAdam et al. 2004: 41).

4 Empirical Section

4.1 The Phenomenon: Main Actors and Salient Regions

In both countries, we find a number of Salafi groups and organizations that turned violent before, but especially after 2011. This paper aims at presenting general mechanisms and analyzing the whole jihadist scene in both countries, but focuses empirically on the most dominant group(s) that were consequently most frequently part of the publications.

In Tunisia, a vibrant scene of jihadist groups developed after 2011: The most popular actor was the al-Qaeda brand Ansar al-Sharia fi Tunis (AST), founded in 2011 and banned by the Tunisian government in the summer of 2013. The group was founded in 2011 by Abou Ayadh al-Tunisi (Seifallah Ben Hassine), who led the organization until 2013 (Reichinek 2015: 8). AST had about 10,000 supporters in early 2013 (Werenfels 2015: 67) and pursued a twofold strategy: On the one hand, it provided social services such as food, clothing or medicine (Gartenstein-Ross 2013: 11; Torelli 2017: 112). On the other, the group was responsible for numerous violent incidents in Tunisia, including the attack on the US embassy in Tunis (2012), the assassination of two secular left-wing politicians (Chokri Belaid in February and Mohammed Brahmi in July 2013), and the attack on the Bardo Museum and tourists in Sousse (2015). Following its ban, AST increasingly resorted to violent means and continued to attack the Tunisian military in the marginalized hinterland bordering Algeria and around Kasserine. Numerous sympathizers and members joined the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq or went to Libya as part of the limited national options for action. Another violent group is Katiba Uqba Ibn Nafi (KUIN), which is seen as an exceptional case because it is described as an 'originally Tunisian' violent group. KUIN became more active after the banning of AST, recruited Tunisian youth into its ranks, and seems to dominate the Tunisian jihadist milieu nowadays, focusing its attacks especially on military personnel (Torelli 2017). In addition, there are different IS splinter groups or cells active in Tunisia. IS violence in the country peaked from early 2015 to early 2016; since then, its activities have moved to the mountainous regions in the interior, now targeting mostly security forces (Werenfels 2015; Lounnas 2018; Zelin 2018). Apart from that, there are smaller violent groups active on Tunisian soil such as the Al-Jazara Group or Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) (Mattes 2014; Reichinek 2015; Werenfels 2015). Almost all of the groups tend to operate and hide in the Jabal Chaambi (Chaambi Mountains) region, as well as along the Tunisian-Libyan and Tunisian-Algerian border.

In Egypt, the main violent Islamist group is Ansar Bait al-Maqdis (ABM), which was founded in 2011 and consisted at that time of about 1,000 active members. Originally, the group had close ties with al-Qaeda. After the military coup in 2013 and the criminalization of all Islamist groups, ABM stopped carrying out attacks on Israel and instead perpetrated violence against representatives of the Egyptian state, especially security forces (Gold

2014: 7, Al-Beheiri 2017).[16] In addition, ABM relied on terrorist tactics, for example on the convoy of the Egyptian Interior minister in Cairo in September 2013 (Steinberg 2018: 24). The dominance of the so-called Islamic State starting in 2014 led to a break up within the group: The largest part of the organization acknowledged its proximity to the IS and from then on called itself Wilayat Sinai or Islamic State on the Sinai. It consists nowadays of about 800 to 1,000 members (ibid.: 23; Awad 2016a). However, part of ABM remains close to al-Qaeda (Dentice 2016: 132ff.; Puckova 2017). By mid 2015 the IS had become very strong in Egypt, had built many cells that were active in the Nile valley, and had carried out many attacks, such as attacks on Coptic churches in Tanta, Alexandria and Minya, as well as on foreign tourists (Awad 2016b). The government then declared the state of emergency (April 2017). Since then, North Sinai has been the scene of an almost war-like situation in which jihadists and the Egyptian military are fighting for territorial control. By 2018, there was an increasing number of attacks by violent groups, but also of air strikes on jihadist positions in the Sinai area, with the military gaining the upper hand (the so-called "Operation Sinai"). In addition to ABM or Wilayat Sinai, there are different smaller groups such as the Hassm Movement, Liwa al-Thawra (see Awad 2017) or Ajnad Misr ("soldiers of Egypt"). According to Gold (2014), Ajnad Misr was established by Hummam Muhammed Attiyah in 2013 as a splinter group of ABM, and came to public attention in January 2014. The members of the group were involved in operations in the Greater Cairo areas of Egypt.[17]

Egypt	Tunisia
• Ajnad Misr • **Ansar Bait al-Maqdis** (ABM), later **Wilayat Sinai** (IS Sinai province) • Hassm Movement • Jamaat al-Murabiteen • Jamaat Jund al-Islam • Liwa al-Thawra • Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen (Gaza-Sinai) • Muhammad Jamal Network (MJN) • Salafiya Jihadiya	• Al-Jazara Group • Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) • **Ansar al-Sharia fi Tunis** (AST) • **Katiba Uqba ibn Nafi** (KUIN) • Islamic State • Jund al-Khilafah • Leagues for the Protection of the Revolution • Tunisian Islamic Combatant Group (TICG)

Table 2: Brief overview on the most active violent Islamist groups in Egypt and Tunisia. The most dominant group that is also mostly covered by the literature is **marked in boldface**.

The issue of socioeconomic marginalization seems to be common to both countries and creates hotspots for radicalization and the emergence of violent groups. It is striking that Islamist radicalization in Egypt and Tunisia often grows in specific zones and areas that share socioeconomic marginalization as a common characteristic: In Tunisia, violent Islamist groups can be seen as "a phenomenon rooted in specific areas of the country: the poorer suburbs of large and middle-sized cities" (Merone 2017: 77; see also Malka

16 Interestingly, the so-called "economic warfare" or "economic Jihad" was part of ABM's strategies, targeting the most significant infrastructures of the Egyptian economy, e.g., the Arab Gas Pipeline (Gold 2016: 11f.; Dentice 2018: 28, 39).

17 There seem to be numerous other violent groups, about which we do not have comprehensive information (for example, Takfir Wal Hijra, Jammat al-Murabiteen, Jamaat Jund al-Islam, and Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen. For information on (violent) Islamist groups linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, e.g., Hassm Movement and Liwa al-Thawra, see Awad/Hashem 2015 and Awad 2017.

2015: 119; Marks 2015: 4f.; Duhaut 2017: 64). The Tunisian border zones with Libya and Algeria and especially the area around Jabal Chaambi are the hot spots for violent jihadist groups (Lamloum 2016; Boukhars 2017; Duhaut 2017). In Egypt, the economic and cultural fracture lines fall at the national level (north vs. south) and the urban level (Imbaba, Manshiyat Nasr as marginalized quarters of Cairo). The most salient 'special zone' is the Sinai Peninsula, where an entrenchment of jihadist groups related to social (Bedouin tribes), natural (mountains, territorial enclaves) and geographic conditions (border zone) can be found (Duhaut 2017: 65; see also Dentice 2018).

Many authors also agree that marginalization presents a background against which radicalization may be more likely to occur (e.g., Merone/Cavatorta 2012; Marks 2013; Alterman/McCants 2015; Ben Yaghlane 2015; Colombo 2016; Dentice 2018; Duhaut 2017; IRI 2017; Merone 2017; Torelli 2017; Herbert 2018; Watanabe 2018; Sadiki 2019). Generally, it must be pointed out that marginalization involves many different factors; including (socioeconomic) exclusion or a lack of penetration and control by the state that facilitates the emergence and growth of violent groups. For Tunisia, Larbi Sadiki differentiates between "regional estrangement", "economic and development estrangement" and "human estrangement" that add up to multiple marginalization in the country (Sadiki 2019: 1). Some authors also differentiate among social, political or economic marginalization (e.g., Colombo 2016: 119f.). Consequently, the exact role of socioeconomic aspects in marginalization is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, the existing literature does suggest that socioeconomic marginalization leads to corresponding grievances and thus promotes individual and collective processes of radicalization: "[T]he Tunisian case shows that radicalization is the consequence of multiple layers of marginalization, including political, social and religious marginalization" (Colombo 2016: 119f.). The nature of marginalization as the most "recurrent theme binding Tunisia's young Salafi jihadis […] goes beyond being simply poverty-stricken or less educated" (Marks 2013: 110), and includes a feeling of being 'forgotten' by the state (Duhaut 2017: 71). There is also much empirical evidence that supports this assumption for Egypt, viewing the Sinai Peninsula in general as a marginalized borderland and simultaneously taking the economic disparity between northern (the more socioeconomically marginalized) and southern (the more developed part) Sinai into account: Dentice traces the development of the Sinai Peninsula from the 1980s to 2017 and concludes that "[u]nequal development and the government's neglect and disdain" as well as the locals' alienation from the economic and socio-political dimensions compounded a "deep polarisation, sowing the seeds for a spiral of violence and instability" (Dentice 2018: 21).

4.2 Socioeconomic Grievances

Socioeconomic grievances are considered to be one of the most important causes of radicalization (United Nations General Assembly 2016; Bundesregierung 2017: 9, EuroMeSCo 2017). In the literature on Egypt and Tunisia, one direct and one indirect type of argument linking socioeconomic grievances and radicalization can be found:

A) Socioeconomic grievances constitute individual and/or collective motives for individual radicalization and therefore lead to an individual propensity to radicalization. In the literature, there are several dimensions to the link between socioeconomic grievances and individual or collective motives for radicalization. First of all, lack of opportunities, poverty and unemployment are often said to lead to supporting or even joining violent Islamist groups in both countries (e.g., Dunne 2015; IRI 2017: 10). In that regard, a study of the local drivers of violent extremism in Tunisia (IRI 2017), which is based on findings from focus group discussions and interviews, provides very interesting insights: The data

"reported various factors that contribute to individual and collective grievances, including discrimination, socio-economic marginalization, lack of opportunities, poverty, and unemployment" (ibid.: 10).

When it comes to collective motives for radicalization constituted by socioeconomic grievances, different aspects can be identified. Of course, these collective states also affect individuals – thus, differentiation between the individual and the collective level (in the literature) is not easy. For Tunisia and Egypt alike, the youth seem to be a crucial point when it comes to analyzing radicalization processes. First of all, youth unemployment is identified as a very relevant factor (e.g., Fahmi/Meddeb 2015; Colombo 2016: 114–116; Duhaut 2017: 69; Zoubir 2017: 5), but not as a sufficient condition (Bendermel 2015; Dunne 2015; Moos 2017). Some authors see evidence for a generational conflict that underlies the radicalization of young people (Dunne 2015; Marks 2015; Merone 2017; Zoubir 2017). It has become more and more difficult to enter the labor market, for university-trained employees too. Young people wait years for a job: In sociological terms, "[p]eople without jobs are forced to remain 'young' – dependent on their parents. Being stuck in the supposedly transitional phase termed waithood – waiting to be included and to become adult (Singerman 2007) – is the primary grievance of young jobless protesters" (Vatthauer/Weipert-Fenner 2017: 17; see also Torelli 2017: 31). For Tunisia, it is said that the "generational gap […] has exacerbated the feeling of maginalisation among the youth" (Zoubir 2017: 4). Socioeconomic problems played a role in the popularity of AST, and interestingly the "ideological rift inside the AST between the 'moderate' wing and the more violent one also reflects a generational gap, with the younger part of the movement favoring more radical methods compared to the older generation" (Torelli 2016: 166).[18] Concerning gender, Jihadi Salafism in Tunisia is described "as a primarily male 'mouvance' (loosely defined social trend), that has its roots in a disenfranchised group of marginalized persons" (Marks 2013: 110). Another aspect mentioned in the literature is a class element in radicalization (Merone/Cavatorta 2012: 14; Torelli/Varvelli 2014: 62). Especially in Tunisia, Salafism is linked to

> "the political and social expression of a class of largely disenfranchised youth that perceives, rightly or wrongly, the construction of a new political system as the renovation of a mechanism that, while no longer authoritarian, still excludes them from the enjoyment of material and ethical benefits they feel entitled to for having played a crucial role in the defeat of the Ben Ali regime." (Merone/Cavatorta 2012: 14)

"The sociological composition of these Salafist radicals is that of the mouhammishin – the disenfranchised – of Tunisian society" (ibid.: 6). For Egypt, the same could be said for example for the Bedouin population in Sinai: "The grievances […] rendered them vulnerable to radical Islam" (Watanabe 2015: 2; see also Alterman/McCants 2015; El Deen 2016; Duhaut 2017). Furthermore, and as mentioned above, socioeconomic grievances strike specific zones and areas, which brings in the geographical aspect that is also linked to specific groups. Egypt's number one spot of radical groups is Northern Sinai which was "marginalized over years, underdeveloped, and inhabited by a majority of Bedouin population that suffers from exclusion and lack of equal opportunities" (Akl 2018: 109; see 4.3

18 Economic concerns also play a role in non-Islamist youth activism: A large number of youth activists need "international attention in order to support themselves and their projects financially. […] Despite considerable change, decision making in the county still appears to be the field of the economic giants of the past, who have traditionally excluded many, especially youth, from deliberating on crucial matters such as the creation of a more equitable economic landscape." (Boutieri 2015).

for more details). Similar patterns can be observed in Tunisia: "Aggrieved youth sympathize with jihadists because they tend to share the same underprivileged socioeconomic backgrounds and inhabit the same blighted neighborhoods" (Boukhars 2017: 5).

B) Socioeconomic grievances lead to a delegitimization of the state or an existing order and thus enhance the individual or collective propensity to support or even join radical/violent Islamist groups. Generally, the majority of the publications reviewed on the topic emphasize the notion that socioeconomic grievances constitute individual and/or collective motives for radicalization in both countries (as stated above). Nevertheless, a smaller part of the literature emphasizes a more indirect link between socioeconomic grievances and radicalization, and advances the delegitimization argument. In general, marginalization seems to be one of the most central motives for radicalization, leading to an individual propensity to radicalization. However, it also strengthens the perception of state failure and thus triggers radicalization in a more indirect way. It is often said that especially young Tunisians and Egyptians are content with neither the economic performance of their country nor their personal (socioeconomic) situation (e.g., Boutieri 2015; Dunne 2015; Colombo 2016; Duhaut 2017; IRI 2017). Thus, the youth seem to be a group that is particularly vulnerable to radicalization processes, which makes it difficult to differentiate between individual and group or collective propensities.

This frustration and/or disappointment, that manifests itself for example in a feeling of being 'forgotten' by the state (Duhaut 2017: 71; see also Boukhars 2017; Macdonald/Waggoner 2018; ITES 2018: 53f.) is often mentioned as the underlying 'cause' of socioeconomic grievances (e.g., Boutieri 2015; Dunne 2015; Colombo 2016; Duhaut 2017; IRI 2017; Moos 2017; Akl 2018). This is also linked to perceptions of injustice (Ben Mustapha Ben Arab 2018: 98; ITES 2018: 64ff.) or to a "deeply rooted stigma of inferiority" (ITES 2018: 53f.). For the Tunisian case, these feelings of frustration and disappointment are often said to be connected to unfulfilled hopes and expectations linked to the revolution and the „failure of the democratic transition to improve the economic conditions for young Tunisians" (Boukhars 2017: 6). Furthermore, there is a general lack of (the perception of) legitimacy in both countries when it comes to the national state:

> "These grievances are directly related to perceptions of corruption in government and public institutions, as well as institutional injustice which promotes feelings of hopelessness that leads to stress and depression and results in increased violence". (IRI 2017: 10)

Moreover, (perceived) alienation seems to be a dominant common pattern in both countries: The (socioeconomic) grievances of the Egyptian Bedouins lead to an alienation from the state (Watanabe 2015: 3), that "has also been generated by the failure of Egyptian governments to respond to their socio-economic needs" (Ibid.: 2). Also for the Tunisian case, alienation is said to be one of the most important triggering motives for the "quest for an alternative affiliation and belonging" (ITES 2018: 60), because the insecure economic situation creates moods of mistrust towards the state (Ibid.: 65). Former foreign fighters explained that the tension in their relationship with the state is "caused by the state's inability to create opportunities and integrate young people into the circuits of economic and social life", sometimes even "accusing the state of deliberately excluding them from society" (Ibid.: 59).

All in all, this tension in the relationship with the state and its delegitimization caused by socioeconomic grievances paves the ground for the vulnerability to radical Islam: "[R]ebels adopt Salafi jihadism because it offers the promise of imagining alternatives to a political and social system that is deeply corrupt and unjust" (Boukhars 2018: 5). As Colombo (2016: 119f.) puts it for the Tunisian case, the "feeling of being a victim of dif-

ferent kinds of exclusion ultimately leads (after the disillusion of the revolution) to belief in another dream: the utopia of the Islamic State."

4.3 Socioeconomic Opportunities

Again, we identified one direct and one indirect type of argument that link socioeconomic opportunities and Islamist radicalization:

A) Socioeconomic opportunities can contribute to radicalization by facilitating the generation of material resources by violent Islamist groups. The terrorist groups active in Tunisia and Egypt overcome their financial problems mainly from legal and illegal sources. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), for example, has received domestic and external (from Yemen, Libya, Mali) donations. There are signs of financial help from more than 100 foreign organizations, e.g., from the Gulf. Furthermore, AQIM was supported by Saudi and Kuwaiti Foundations donating food, clothing, medicine and preaching materials through the Tunisian Society for the Preservation of Islamic Heritage. Sometimes these official donations are used for jihadist purposes (Werenfels 2015: 66). The groups collect money in (unsupervised) mosques (ibid.) from some religious Tunisians, including wealthy merchants, and through the charity of mosques unofficially run by their members, or from their sympathizers (Allani 2015: 104 on AST).

Jihadi groups also receive donations from terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda or ISIS, which support their like-minded groups (al-Anani/Malik 2013). In addition to such support, money laundering, illicit trade and smuggling in the border regions also contribute to the income of these groups. The instability and weakness of the state in the border areas between Tunisia/Libya, Tunisia/Algeria and in the Sinai area encourage the inhabitants of the region to indulge in cross-border smuggling. Consequently, links can be assumed to exist between Islamist group(s) and crime networks such as smugglers: "[T]he presence of illegal trafficking can be exploited by jihadist groups, which can fit into the smuggling chain for their own purposes" (Torelli 2018: 121). The violent group Uqba Ibn Nafi Brigade has been covering its financial needs through well connected networks of smugglers operating in the border areas. However, the Tunisian government's efforts to tackle the smuggling networks and the connected violent Islamist groups are half-hearted, since the local population in the poor border regions also benefits from smuggling and the associated shadow economy (Werenfels 2015: 65). Smuggling itself may be a product of the borders, since smuggling routes are trade routes with long histories interrupted by state building. Safe havens provide ideal conditions for the maintenance of public order or security and also facilitate resource generation by any means. They also "provide physical settings in which political violence can survive over time" and

> "provide an ideal place to experiment with, to consolidate, to actualize, and to manifest the counterhegemonic consciousness upon which the violent political organization builds the legitimacy and loyalty that provides the rationale for its persistence." (Bosi 2013: 95)

According to Kausch (2015) the violent groups benefit from the lawless border areas between Tunisia/Libya and Tunisia/Algeria and the ISIS affiliated AST have established an alliance with smugglers to establish monopoly control of illegal trade. Sinai is strategically and economically important for Egypt (Gold 2014). Due to the failure of consecutive Egyptian governments to provide social justice and economic development, the region has become a lawless territory and a center for different violent jihadi groups. This situation has also fostered the growth of illicit trade and the increase in crime in the Peninsula, and has provided opportunities for different jihadi militants groups like ABM to

step into the region and recruit members (ibid.). Due to the Bedouin tribes' influence and knowledge of the region, the violent Islamist groups, especially ABM, have recruited a large number of them into their ranks and use their experience in controlling key smuggling routes, for example along the Israeli border to Gaza (ibid.). Dentice (2014) argues that socioeconomic exclusion of Bedouins by the Egyptian government compelled them to find other means of survival; consequently, there has been growth of the informal economy, which is primarily based on smuggling drugs, arms, and human trafficking.

Apart from smuggling, the jihadi groups present in mainland Egypt use other ways of earning money, such as for example robberies in government buildings or hijacking of trucks (ibid.). There are rivalries among smugglers and the tribes present in the border region of Tunisia and the Sinai region of Egypt. The violent groups benefit from these rivalries and have established bases and are controlling smuggling activities in the area (Gold 2014; Meddeb 2017; Zoubir (2017). An ICG report (2014) also confirmed the nexus between armed jihadists and drug traffickers in the border region between Tunisia and Libya, as does Dentice (2018) for the Sinai Peninsula: Radicalized Bedouin tribe members (e.g., from Sawarka, Masaid or Tarabin) often played important roles in ABM while those tribes "have considerable influence in northern Sinai, controlling key smuggling routes […] and having intimate knowledge of the territory" (Dentice 2018: 28; see also Watanabe 2015). The jihadi groups seem to have a monopoly on fuel smuggling, contraband, and human, weapons and drug trafficking. In this way, they are able to cover their financial needs. Furthermore, the groups also support and sustain themselves: The financial support of AQIM, initially to AST and later to the Uqba Ibn Nafi Brigade, has strengthened these groups.

B) Socioeconomic opportunities can provide violent Islamist groups with the opportunity to attract supporters and followers by offering social services. The absence of the state and of state services creates a 'gap' that can be filled by various actors: (Armed) Rebel groups can benefit from such ineffective state control and fill the governance gap in those areas, for example through "the provision of a whole range of services for policing and providing public goods to the local community" (Bosi 2013: 81).[19] Concerning Egypt and Tunisia, the "absence of effective public services opens the field for the rise of Islamist networks with their own political agendas" (Taşpınar 2015: 80). Ansar al-Sharia for example provided basic goods and food in the poorest regions of Tunisia, such as the suburbs of Tunis and the inland regions, especially Sidi Bouzid, Jendouba, Kairouan, and Kasserine (Fahmi/Meddeb 2015), "positioning them as alternative to the official state programs" (Torelli 2016: 163). Interestingly, there is no evidence that Wilayat Sinai provides services that can "rival what ordinary Egyptian charities or even the Egyptian military give to Egypt's poor" (Awad 2016a: 14), even if some media outlets are said to have conflated this with serious service provision.

Political and violent Islamist groups combine political activities with the provision of social services that replace the state in some cases (Clark 2004, Guazzone/Pioppi 2009).[20] Recent studies of Islamist radicalization have focused on the importance of processes at the local level (e.g., Varvelli 2016), that should be more broadly reflected in the relation-

19 Grynkewich highlights three main benefits for groups from providing goods: "First, the creation of a social welfare infrastructure highlights the failure of the state to fulfill its side of the social contract, thereby challenging the legitimacy of the state. Second, non-state social welfare organizations offer the population an alternative entity in which to place their loyalty. Third, a group that gains the loyalty of the populace commands a steady stream of resources with which it can wage battle against the regime" (Grynkewich 2008: 353).

20 Quietist Islamist groups only provide social services without political activism.

ship between the center and the periphery of a country and transnational links (Campana/Jourde 2017). Furthermore, the state plays another crucial role in addressing such existing grievances and is often unable or unwilling to do so, which contributes to frustration and the feeling of being forgotten by the state (Dunne 2015; Zoubir 2017: 5). Hence, those gaps are also filled by Salafist preachers who

> "preach about injustice, humiliation, and inequality, and they provide means for young people to take action. They understand what motivates young people and focus on education and social work, which is empowering for many young people who feel marginalized." (Malka 2015: 117)

Again, there is a link to marginalization: Sinai in Egypt and the Tunisian border regions with Algeria and Libya are both clear examples of socioeconomically marginalized regions, where the state has no effective control. As Lamloum (2016) points out, a large majority of the people living in the Tunisian border have a strong sense of being marginalized.[21] The dire situation in these regions is often portrayed as the background against which the radicalization of Islamist actors must be understood (Fahmi/Meddeb 2015; Joya/Gormus 2015). Thus, these regions are vulnerable to radicalization to a particular degree (Pargeter 2009; USAID 2011: 3; Mölling/Werenfels 2014: 2; Ratka/Roux 2016). In general, borders are often seen as ungoverned spaces, especially in weak states. This assumption is rejected by the rebel governance approach, because 'absence of the state' must always be seen in relation to its surroundings:[22] The non-effective state control in some areas offers possibilities for (violent Islamist) groups to settle, to spread and to mobilize.

Generally, it must be said that the relative absence of the state and rebel governance affect many different aspects of life – economic, social or political. Furthermore, governance (whether it includes territory or not) and the provision of social services is not necessarily an easy process, but can be competitive. There is a huge potential for conflict, for example in the form of hostility between actors or groups (e.g., al-Qaeda vs. ISIS or their offshoots). The literature provides a small number of hints of the importance of socioeconomic opportunities for radicalization, but there is no publication which explicitly studies this aspect.

4.4 Framing Processes and Socioeconomic Narratives

Generally speaking, the literature reviewed does not address the entire topic of narratives of Islamist groups in both countries very frequently – even if we should theoretically expect that this aspect is important for Egypt and Tunisia, taking research about framing processes and their importance for mobilization in the context of social movements into account. Surprisingly, apart from two chapters in an edited volume (Githens-Mazer 2016, Staffell 2016), only anecdotal evidence could be found in the literature. Analyzing socioeconomic grievances and opportunities reveals obvious interconnections in the form of identity aspects, as well as narratives and the concept of frames and framing.[23] The more privileged use "the plight of the poor as one justification for committing violence and for

21 See also Pollock/Wehrey 2018 for further information on the socioeconomic situation along the Tunisian-Libyan border and section 4.1. for more detailed remarks on marginalization.

22 Jennifer M. Hazen comments that the term 'ungoverned' is misleading, since absolutely ungoverned areas are rare: "'Ungoverned' refers to the lack of effective state governance, not the lack of governance in total" (Hazen 2010: 379). See section 3 for further information on the rebel governance concept.

23 Such narratives are probably also part of the social media strategies of violent groups; this could be an interesting starting point for further research.

broadening their appeal," claiming to speak on behalf of the poor (von Hippel 2010: 61). Leaders of violent Islamist groups can use narratives that address existing individual or collective grievances to motivate people to join and support their group. This is also important in the context of ungoverned areas and rebel governance, as explained above.

Looking at framing and narratives, the Egyptian case is a very interesting one, because the major group either split up or transformed itself into a province of IS (Wilayat Sinai) in 2014. During this transformation from ABM to Wilayat Sinai the narratives also changed in how this shift was presented. As Staffell says, "In this passage, then, an attempt is made to fuse the parochial jihadist narrative, which plays on the grievances of the people of Sinai (characteristic of ABM), with the vision of a caliphate being realised, and targeting the great enemy 'the Jews'" (Staffell 2016: 62f.). Contrary to that, Dentice is of the opinion that after the ousting of Mohammed Morsi in July 2013, "ABM altered its narrative from protector of local populations and their interests, to embrace a new rhetoric involving no consideration for Sinai insurgencies and Bedouin grievances" (Dentice 2018: 33). Later on, in November 2014, the IS leadership directly addressed the Egyptian population in a statement:

> "In this context, I do not want to miss this opportunity to send my message to our people in Egypt. What are you waiting for after your dignities have been violated, and the bloods of your sons have been shed at the hands of such a reckless tyrant and his soldiers? When will you swords be unsheathed against your enemies, in order to eliminate such disgrace inflicted on you? Have you accepted the disgrace and humiliation?" (translated IS statement, cited in Staffell 2016: 63)

Wilayat Sinai seems to have learned that reference to local grievances, such as prosperity, dignity and wealth, is crucial when it comes to legitimacy and support: "The progression of WS statements appears to show learning that local narratives must have primacy if local hearts and minds are to be won over" (Staffell 2016: 65).

The violent groups have provided a sense of belonging to individuals and groups in both countries and encouraged them to carry out religious violence to protect their identity. After the uprisings of 2011 one of the narratives of the violent groups was the question of Tunisian identity, whose Arab Muslim aspect was suppressed under the Bourguiba and Ben Ali regime, while the secular quasi European identity was promoted (Cavatorta/Haugbølle 2012). According to Malka and Balboni (2016), the demands for emphasis on the Arab Muslim identity was a reaction to the policies of the preceding regimes. The ideological narratives used by these groups were "wage a war in the name of God on infidels, illegitimate regimes and corruption, in a bid to create an Islamic state based on the principle of divine justice and welfare" (El Amraoui 2014). Generally, Islamist ideology plays an important role in any Islamic society and questions of social justice are strong pillars in Islamic ideology (Shepard 1992; Lia 1998).

The Tunisian and Egyptian Islamist violent groups were familiar with the problems of identity in their societies and used these narratives to prey on marginalized and disenfranchised youth: After the uprisings in 2011 the violent Islamic groups in Tunisia and Egypt targeted marginalized and insecure regions to propagate their ideas through different kinds of narrative. For example, the Tunisian Salafi leadership always admits that they feel pride by saying that they belong to the disenfranchised people of the society (Merone/Cavatorta 2012). In the case of Tunisia, it is also said that a "battle of narratives" (Githens-Mazer 2016: 87) is taking place between al-Qaeda and IS affiliated groups.

Beside this, the 'incomplete' revolution plays a big role in people's minds:

> "In the Tunisian context, the narrative appeal of Islamically inspired violent radicalization stems from the sense that the revolution has lost its way. […] In this view, the lack of an economic future, the sense that the revolution failed to deliver instant gratification by changing and easing at least mundane and difficult tasks of everyday life – finding work, earning enough to buy food, eat meat for all meals – become not about the failure of revolutions per se, but specifically about the incomplete nature of the 2011 revolution." (Githens-Mazer 2016: 85f.)

The violent Tunisian groups, especially AST, used the wealth of the authorities as a propaganda tool to attract the sympathies of marginalized youth and channel their anger against the authorities (Duhaut 2017). According to Fahmi and Meddeb (2015: 14) "Salafi jihadism provides disappointed youth with a grammar of rebellion, transforming the Islamic State into an alternative to the "illegitimate" national state." This is why it seems to make sense to argue "that rebels adopt Salafi jihadism because it offers the promise of imagining alternatives to a deeply corrupt and unjust political and social system" (Boukhars 2018). Also IS propaganda is said to be very successful in Tunisia: "It promised political purpose and social prestige gained from fighting for a greater cause, a sense of belonging once in the caliphate, and material benefits, including salaries and housing" (Watanabe 2018: 2; see also IRI 2017: 12).

Marks (2013) is of the opinion that Salafi Jihadism offers young people a sense of identity and an inspiration to fight for something bigger than themselves. For them, Salafism and Jihadism offers a completely different way of living and sense of belonging. The violent groups present in Sinai also benefited from the identity issue: The Bedouins experienced a long history of marginalization and socioeconomic, but also political grievances (see Dentice 2018), that made them vulnerable to radical ideas. Salafi jihadists offered Bedouins a platform where they can consider themselves part of Islamic Umma (Gold 2014). The violent Islamist groups present in the Sinai have helped the population through their social services program and have used the absence of the state and/or of state services as a propaganda tool to present themselves as the defender of the population of the region (ibid.). The same could be said for the distribution of food and medicine in Tunisia by AST.

To conclude this section, violent Islamist groups are very keen to make use of existing socioeconomic grievances and opportunities, for example by claiming to speak on behalf of the poor, by using the absence of the state as a propaganda tool to present themselves as the defenders of the population of the region or by denouncing the wealth and corruption of the ruling elites. Thus, this constructivist perspective has vast explanatory power, but until now has rarely been covered in the literature. We call for systematic research in this area.

5 Conclusion

Based on a review of existing scholarship and non-academic publications such as policy briefs and reports, the paper develops a framework that identifies key mechanisms that link socioeconomic factors and Islamist radicalization. The paper brings together the fragmented evidence that socioeconomic aspects matter for radicalization processes in Egypt and Tunisia. More specifically, the framework distinguishes among socioeconomic grievances, socioeconomic opportunities, and socioeconomic narratives. Socioeconomic grievances can drive processes of radicalization by motivating individuals or groups to use violent tactics or join violent groups, and by contributing to the delegitimization of the

state, which, in turn, can legitimize the use of violence. Socioeconomic opportunities, which are basically constituted by the (relative) absence of the state and of state services, can contribute to radicalization by facilitating the generation of material resources on the part of violent groups (e.g., through criminal activities), and by providing radical groups with the opportunity to attract supporters and followers by offering social services. Socioeconomic narratives show how leaders of violent Islamist groups make use of existing or perceived socioeconomic grievances or opportunities.

In general, radicalization must be seen as a multi-dimensional, highly complex process – simply because there are socioeconomic 'problems' such as grievances or the lack of effective state control, need not lead individuals or groups to become radical or even violent. It is not the aim of this paper to present a complete explanation for every kind of radicalization; we do not want to generalize or to be deterministic about our results. In addition, there are numerous other variables that can promote radicalization (e.g., ideological, political, psychological). Nevertheless, there is sufficient empirical evidence to assume that socioeconomic aspects, as argued above for Tunisia and Egypt, are a relevant topic for studying mobilization and/or radicalization processes. After all, it seems reasonable that socioeconomic grievances motivate or trigger radicalization. Concerning our assumptions about the influence of socioeconomic opportunities, in our line of thinking it seems at least plausible that these are relevant. Studying (socioeconomic) narratives used by violent groups can provide crucial insights about how leaders or groups make sense of existing socioeconomic hardships and about the reasons why people join those groups. There is a need for further empirical and field research to achieve more sophisticated results.

And finally, analysis of the socioeconomic dimension of (Islamist) radicalization matters, not least, because it can help develop and implement potent approaches for prevention and deradicalization. Again, there is a need for further and systematic empirical research on Tunisia and Egypt and on other cases in the MENA region, as well as for comparative research, for example with European countries. The framework we developed can serve as a research agenda and as an orientation for future empirical, in-depth, and comparative research.

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